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Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8343rd meeting

Thursday, 6 September 2018, 11.40 a.m.

New York

President:	Mrs. Haley	(United States of America)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mrs. Cordova Soria
	China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce

Agenda

Letter dated 13 March 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/218)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.40 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Letter dated 13 March 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/218)

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I want to thank you, Madam President, for scheduling this meeting today at short notice following the announcements in the United Kingdom yesterday.

When the Security Council last met on this issue, on 18 April (see S/PV.8237), I undertook to update the Council in the light of significant developments. My Prime Minister's full statement to Parliament was circulated to the Security Council as document S/2018/814. As the British Prime Minister announced yesterday in Parliament, the United Kingdom has reached a significant conclusion in the Salisbury chemical weapons investigation. I will come to that later, but first I will provide a brief summary of what happened in Salisbury earlier this year.

On Sunday, 4 March, Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia were found unconscious on a bench in the city centre after being poisoned by a Novichok nerve agent. Detective Sergeant Nick Bailey, a Wiltshire police officer, was also seriously ill after having been exposed to a nerve agent. Following that attack, the United Kingdom notified the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and invited it to confirm the identity of the substance involved, while we briefed members of the Security Council. The OPCW's independent expert laboratories confirmed the United Kingdom's identification of the Novichok nerve agent.

Thankfully, the Skripals are recovering. But, on 30 June, 44 year-old mother of three, Dawn Sturgess, fell ill in the nearby town of Amesbury after being exposed to Novichok. Sadly, she died on 8 July. Her partner, Charlie Rowley was also exposed to the nerve agent and became seriously ill. Police have identified that Sturgess and Rowley came into contact with a counterfeit perfume bottle that had been discarded in Salisbury. Tests of that bottle after its recovery by police confirmed it contained a significant amount of highly lethal Novichok nerve agent.

On 4 September, the OPCW's independent expert laboratories again confirmed the United Kingdom's identification of the Novichok nerve agent with a very high level of purity. I remind Council members that the very high level of purity means that it will have been made by a State.

The inquiry into the Amesbury incident has now been formally linked by the police with the attempted murder of the Skripals. Independent experts of the OPCW have confirmed the identifications as Novichok nerve agents, and it is the exact same chemical that was used in both attacks.

It stretches credulity that the identification of such a nerve agent twice in close proximity could be a coincidence. We have previously shared with the Council the information about the Russian foliant programme from the 2000s, but to recap briefly, there was development of Novichok outside the Chemical Weapons Convention, and Russian agents were trained in assassination techniques, including the use of such agents on door handles.

In the United Kingdom, the police are independent of Government, and they have been conducting a painstaking forensic investigation. That investigation has involved approximately 250 detectives, who have trawled through more than 11,000 hours of closed-circuit television (CCTV) footage and have taken more than 1,400 statements. Working around the clock, they have carried out painstaking and methodical work to ascertain exactly which individuals were responsible and the methods they used to carry out the attack.

That evidence has been independently reviewed by the Crown Prosecution Service, and it has concluded there is a sufficient basis to bring charges. We have thus independently concluded that there is enough evidence to bring charges against two Russian nationals for the following crimes: conspiracy to murder Sergei Skripal; attempted murder of Sergei and Yulia Skripal and Detective Sergeant Nick Bailey; use and possession of Novichok; and causing grievous bodily harm with intent to Yulia Skripal and Nick Bailey. The investigation into the murder of Dawn Sturgess remains ongoing.

The evidence reveals the following. It shows the arrival of two individuals travelling under the names of Alexander Petrov and Ruslan Boshirov to the United Kingdom from Russia. CCTV and other evidence records their travel to and from Salisbury and, crucially, there are images that clearly places them in the vicinity of the Skripal's house at 11:58 a.m. on Sunday, 4 March. That was moments before the attack took place, which involved placing the substance on the Skripal's front door handle. Should any Council member wish, we can share copies of those images. Furthermore, testing of the hotel where the pair stayed in London revealed the presence of traces of the Novichok substance in their hotel room.

Based on a thorough analysis of our intelligence, the United Kingdom Government has concluded that the two individuals named by the police investigation are in fact officers from the Russian Military Intelligence Service, also known as the GRU. That is a body of the Russian State.

When we briefed the Council before, we attributed responsibility to Russia on the basis of technical means, operational experience — and I recall the case of Litvinenko here — and motive. Russian statements have said that former Russian agents are, if you like, fair game for assassination. Those arguments have now been firmly reinforced by the clear evidence of the involvement of identified Russian nationals travelling to the United Kingdom from Moscow and returning there on Russian passports. That evidence has been sufficient for our independent prosecuting authorities to bring criminal charges in relation to the Salisbury attack and to issue European arrest warrants.

Those two individuals are no longer in the United Kingdom. Were they with us, those two suspects, within United Kingdom jurisdiction, would be liable to arrest on a clear basis in law for their attempted murder crimes. It is clear that the Russian State does not permit the extradition of Russian nationals, and I understand that is a prohibition in the Russian Constitution. Therefore, with respect to those two individuals, we have obtained a European arrest warrant and we will shortly issue an INTERPOL Red Notice. Should either of those individuals ever gain travel outside Russia, we will take every step open to us to detain them, extradite them and bring them to face justice in the United Kingdom.

We responded at the time to Russian behaviour robustly. The Council will recall that we were joined by 28 partners and NATO in expelling more than 150 Russian intelligence officers. That was a proportionate and direct response to deter and degrade Russia's ability to conduct further operations in future and to reduce its ability to use the GRU network to cause our citizens harm.

We have clear evidence of Russian State involvement in what happened in Salisbury and the use of chemical warfare — reckless involvement endangering the lives of many citizens, and reckless involvement engangering the universal prohibition on the use of chemical weapons.

As the Council has discussed before, there is an established pattern of maligned Russian behaviour perpetrated by military and intelligence agencies overseas, examples of which are the October 2016 coup attempt in Montenegro, the June 2017 NotPetya cyberattack, which caused an estimated $1.2 billion in damage worldwide, and other cyberattacks. The GRU has time and again been responsible for Russian interference in other countries' affairs, and most recently we saw a United States indictments of GRU individuals in relation to the 2016 Democratic National Committee hack. Now, in the light of the evidence from Salisbury, we see that GRU activity also encompasses the use of an illegal military-grade nerve agent on European soil.

The five permanent members of the Security Council (P-5) bear a particular responsibility to uphold global norms and international law, and all the more so where weapons of mass destruction are concerned. One P-5 member has not upheld those important norms. One P-5 member has but undertaken a pattern of behaviour that showed that it tried to murder the Skripals, played dice with the lives of the people of Salisbury and work in a parallel universe where the normal rules of international affairs are inverted.

That is a direct challenge to the rules-based international system, which has kept all of us safe, including Russia, since 1945. In the face of such behaviour, the international community needs to continue to defend the laws, norms and institutions that safeguard our citizens against chemical weapons and safeguard them against the threat of hostile foreign interference. That is why the British Prime Minister yesterday set out the importance of using transparent multilateral mechanisms to identify and hold malign actors to account. Allow me to summarize

the steps that we believe should now be taken by the international community.

We need to work together to strengthen the Chemical Weapons Convention against the use of chemical weapons around the world, which we saw most recently violated on the streets of the United Kingdom. We need to build further the capability of the OPCW to attribute the use of chemical weapons. There can be no place for such incidents as Salisbury again. We need to shine a light on the use of State agencies to undermine the rule of law and interfere in the domestic lives of other countries' citizens. And we need to make the best use of our established methods, including sanctions, in curbing threats to our societies and our ways of life.

As Theresa May emphasized yesterday, the United Kingdom has no quarrel with the Russian people. We continue to hold out hope that we will once again enjoy a strong partnership with the Government of that great nation. We fought alongside Russian troops in the Second World War. But we will respond robustly when our security is threatened, the lives of our citizens are endangered and the norms and rules of international law and the international system are flouted in such a brazen and reckless manner.

We stand with our partners and allies. We are determined to continue to disrupt together the hostile activities of foreign intelligence networks on our territories. We will uphold the prohibition of chemical weapons. We will protect our citizens. And we will defend ourselves from all forms of maligned State activity directed against us and our societies.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the convening of this meeting and the information that the representative of the United Kingdom shared with us on the investigations conducted and evidence found, of which we take careful note.

We would like to reiterate our deep concern about the use of a nerve agent in public spaces in the United Kingdom, which claimed the life of an innocent woman and seriously endangered the lives of at least four other people. We express our condolences and solidarity with the victims and with the people of the United Kingdom that were potentially exposed to the chemical agent in question.

Peru resolutely condemns all use of chemical weapons. We consider that such a practice constitutes in and of itself constitutes a threat to international peace and security, an atrocity crime and a flagrant violation of the respective non-proliferation regime.

We therefore reiterate our call on the parties concerned to cooperate fully with the investigations and anything else related to this delicate matter, especially through the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and other competent bodies, in line with the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes. We stress the urgent need to determine responsibility and the corresponding sanctions, within the framework of the rule of law and due process.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the United States presidency for convening this meeting. I also thank the United Kingdom for this very timely update on the results of the British investigation into the exposure of three individuals to a military nerve agent in Salisbury last March. At the outset, on behalf of France, I would like to reiterate the solidarity expressed by our most senior officials to our British friends in the aftermath of the hostile act on 4 March.

The British police investigation has now come to an end. I would like to commend the United Kingdom's commitment to transparency and the way in which it has conducted the investigation in conjunction with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), whose exemplary work I also commend. I will say a few words about what happened, before briefly turning to the more general issues.

The facts are clear: the results of the British investigation, combined with those of the OPCW, confirm the initial analysis, which we agree with, on the absence of any plausible explanation other than that Russia is responsible. Everything lines up. A powerful chemical agent, Novichok, which is considered to be produced by the military, was indeed used in Salisbury against Sergei Skripal and his daughter, and later in Amesbury. I note the British conclusion that such an operation could have been launched and approved only at a sufficiently high level of the Russian State. We have taken note of the issuance by the British justice system of arrest warrants against the two Russian military intelligence officers identified by the British police, and we are prepared to cooperate with its services.

In the light of those very serious elements, I wish to express my country's deep concern and reiterate our condemnation of such acts, which are unacceptable. We have unanimously reaffirmed that position to our partners in NATO and the European Union.

Those actions endanger the safety of many civilians, undermine the safety of one of our closest allies, are contrary to the rules of international law and flout all the principles of mutual cooperation and respect to which we are committed.

The use of chemical weapons should in no way be considered an option at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The re-emergence of those weapons challenges our collective security system in a way that we cannot accept. It is the Council's responsibility to protect the chemical non-proliferation regime, and with it our collective security system. We ask Russia, a member of the Security Council, to respond to all the questions that are raised. We also call on the Council and all our partners, including Russia, to firmly commit themselves to protecting the Chemical Weapons Convention and to reaffirming the prohibition on the use of chemical weapons.

To that end, we must strengthen the capacity of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to ensure that it is able to fulfil its mandate. The implementation of the decision adopted by the Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, held in June following the major incidents in Duma and Salisbury, must serve as our road map. That meeting of the States Parties to the Convention also showed that the majority of the international community shares our concerns about the risk with regard to the chemical non-proliferation regime being called into question and supports the principle of strengthening the Convention's means of protection.

It is essential to provide the international community with an investigation and accountability mechanism for all cases of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Such an instrument is essential for the protection of the chemical non-proliferation regime, and we have long encouraged Russia to take that path. We will return to that topic this afternoon during our meeting on Syria.

As the President of the Republic, Mr. Emmanuel Macron, recently recalled, France is resolutely engaged with and committed to the protection of the Chemical Weapons Convention regime, and it is fully determined. We have just reaffirmed that, together with our British, American, German and Canadian partners.

In the same spirit, we want the European Union to adopt a sanctions regime against individuals and entities involved in the proliferation or use of chemical weapons. The Council can count on France's full and complete commitment in that regard.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting. I would also like to thank Ambassador Karen Pierce for the detailed update on the investigation into the attempted murder of Sergei and Yulia Skripal in Salisbury, which involved a nerve agent. We greatly appreciate the transparency of the United Kingdom in this process. We continue to express our full solidarity with the British people and the British Government, as well as our readiness to support our close ally and European partner in taking actions to respond to the shared threat posed by chemical weapons.

Since the beginning, we have condemned that unprecedented attack, which is the first of its kind in Europe after the Second World War. We call on Russia to fully cooperate with the British Government and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

The British investigation concluded that the evidence available is sufficient to state that individuals related to the Russian State are responsible for the attack in Salisbury. Poland has full confidence in the professionalism of the British police and investigating authorities. We believe that the actions taken by the United Kingdom constitute a significant step forward towards ensuring that the use of chemical weapons will not go unanswered.

Let me also reiterate that Poland continues to commend the OPCW and its experts who participated in the technical assistance visit for their outstanding work to determine the facts on the ground in a professional and impartial manner.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): We listened carefully to the important and detailed briefing by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, Ambassador Karen Pierce, with regard to the latest results of the investigations into the Salisbury incident on 4 March. Those investigations recently identified the potential perpetrators.

I would like to commend the comprehensive and professional manner in which the investigations to identify the perpetrators of that heinous crime were carried out. I reiterate our confidence in all the actions and measures taken by the United Kingdom as part of the investigations into that incident.

In that regard, we underscore our principled position in condemning the use of chemical weapons — by any party, at any time and wherever it may occur — as a grave violation of international law. We stress the need to hold those responsible for such use accountable, whether they be individuals, entities, groups or Governments. We also condemn the production, acquisition, stockpiling, possession or direct and indirect transfer of such weapons, pursuant to Article I of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which the State of Kuwait joined in 1997.

We express our confidence in the professionalism, independence and transparency of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We underscore the need to build up its capacity and potential in order to carry out its tasks and shoulder its responsibilities. That would strengthen the non-proliferation regime in the area of investigating the use of such weapons and identifying those responsible for violating it.

In conclusion, we stress the need to uphold international law and norms and to maintain international peace and security, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. We urge all the parties concerned to cooperate with all the investigations under way with regard to this incident.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands): The Kingdom of the Netherlands welcomes the update provided by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom on the investigation into the chemical-weapon attack that took place in Salisbury and the subsequent poisoning in Amesbury last month.

I will make three points. First, the Kingdom of the Netherlands condemns the use of chemical weapons and stands in solidarity with the United Kingdom. Secondly, issuing criminal charges is a significant new development that supports and strengthens our earlier conclusions. Thirdly, the Russian Federation should cooperate to establish the full truth and ensure accountability.

First of all, I would like to repeat, clearly and unequivocally, that the Kingdom of the Netherlands condemns the use of chemical weapons anytime, anywhere and under any circumstances. Let me reiterate our full support for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the important work it does for us. As the United Kingdom is faced with the reckless use of chemical weapons on its own soil, the Netherlands stands in firm solidarity with our neighbour, ally and friend.

Secondly, during previous meetings, the Kingdom of the Netherlands expressed its shock about the reckless attack with a military grade nerve agent on British soil, which exposed innocent civilians to great risks. Since then, we learned that the attack resulted in even more victims, one of whom, Ms. Dawn Sturgess, did not survive. We express our sincere condolences to her loved ones. Issuing criminal charges is an important step that brings us closer to establishing the full truth so that justice can be served. The Kingdom of the Netherlands has full confidence in the investigation carried out by the British authorities and in the fairness and impartiality of the British justice system.

Thirdly, now that the perpetrators of this horrendous act have been identified, they must be brought to justice. Therefore, we call on all States to cooperate to ensure that the two suspects have their day in court in the United Kingdom and to bring the full truth to light about how the attack was carried out. Those who bear responsibility must be held to account. I would like to recall that, on 22 March, the European Council condemned in the strongest possible terms the attack in Salisbury. European leaders unanimously agreed with the assessment of the British Government about the responsibility of the Russian Federation. That assessment has now been confirmed by the criminal investigation, which has led to criminal charges filed against two Russian individuals.

During our previous meeting, on 18 April (see S/PV.8237), the Kingdom of the Netherlands urged the Russian Federation to change its course from denial to cooperation. We reiterate our call for the Russian authorities to provide the United Kingdom with all information to unanswered questions and to cooperate with efforts to bring those responsible to justice.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to thank the United Kingdom for its initiative to convene today's meeting on the letter dated 13 March 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, on behalf of Prime Minister Teresa May, addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/218), following the poisoning of Mr. Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Yulia, in Salisbury on 4 March.

Côte d'Ivoire would like to reiterate its strong condemnation of the poisoning, which was carried out with nerve agent, and the use of chemical weapons, regardless of the perpetrators, whether in times of peace or of war. The investigations conducted by the British police have zeroed in on two individuals who have alleged links to a Russian military intelligence agency.

The Skripal incident reminds us all about the importance of the strict implementation of the relevant provisions of the international non-proliferation architecture. There is no doubt that strict respect for international law in the area of the combating the proliferation of chemical weapons will enable us to prevent such acts, which constitute a threat to international peace and security. My country calls upon all stakeholders to show restraint and work with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, in line with the competencies entrusted to it during its special session held on 26 and 27 June in The Hague, in order to identify those who use chemical weapons and bring them to justice before the competent international judicial bodies.

The Skripal incident is a source of discord in the Security Council. In that context, Côte d'Ivoire remains committed to the values of dialogue, peace and friendship among peoples and calls upon Member States to preserve the unity of the Council, without which our efforts to meet our goal to maintain international peace and security would be in vain.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): We thank the United Kingdom for its timely update.

We note the significance of the new information from the British investigation; we underline our confidence in the British findings. We call on Russia to change course, cooperate with the ongoing investigation and prosecution and fully disclose any nerve agent programmes to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The most recent information provides further evidence that it is highly likely that Russia was responsible for the attack, as previously stated by the European Council.

We regret that, since the Council last discussed these developments (see S/PV.8237), a British national in Amesbury tragically died following contact with a substance that the OPCW confirmed to be the same Novichok nerve agent that poisoned Sergei and Yulia Skripal. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the use of a nerve agent on British soil and express our full solidarity with the United Kingdom, our close friend and European Union partner.

Once again here in the Chamber, we condemn in the strongest terms all use of chemical weapons, strictly prohibited under international law. It is a common responsibility to ensure that the chemical-weapons ban be respected. It can be argued that permanent members of the Security Council have special responsibilities when it comes to curbing weapons of mass destruction. The rules-based international system protects us all, and we must ensure its integrity. In that regard, we reiterate our full support for the OPCW — the independent international organization charged with overseeing the chemical-weapons ban.

Mr. Zhang Dianbin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China listened closely to the briefing by the representative of the United Kingdom.

China categorically opposes the use of chemical weapons by any State, organization or individual, regardless of the circumstances or purposes. China supports the comprehensive, objective and fair investigation of the alleged use of a chemical weapon, which, based on solid evidence, should lead to findings that are factual. That has been our clear and consistent position.

We have followed developments following the Salisbury incident in March. We believe that relevant issues should be addressed in accordance with the rules and procedures of the Chemical Weapons Convention and within the framework of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

We note the letter dated 5 September 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom addressed to the President of the Security Council. We also note that the parties concerned have not reached conclusions acceptable to all parties on issues including who should be held responsible for the incident. In that regard, parties should work on the basis of mutual respect and equal consultation and resolve the issue through dialogue.

At a time when the international community continues to face many challenges, parties should work with, instead of against, each other. It is important to maintain focus on the merits of the incident and avoid politicization and moves that could fuel tensions. Members of the Security Council should remain united

in a common effort to fulfil their duty to maintain international peace and security.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): Having heard today's update on the current situation surrounding the investigation into this well-known incident, my delegation would also like to share its observations on the topic.

First, we appreciate the diligent work of the United Kingdom on the case and the fact that it shared its information with us. However, reviewing such a serious matter requires additional time, in particular to study the findings of the British investigation.

Secondly, it is difficult to arrive at an objective assessment, especially with regard to the conclusions based on the United Kingdom letter of 5 September. We would appreciate receiving more concrete data before drawing any conclusions.

Thirdly, while actions should always be taken, decisions should not be made in haste. As we can see, with time, we will receive increasingly specific information pertaining to the incident, which will eventually enable us to make a fair and objective assessment and conclusion.

As a country that has been affected by the consequences of the use of weapons of mass destruction, we express our sincere solidarity with those who have suffered and are suffering from such weapons today. We remain firmly committed to the fight against the use of chemical weapons and are ready to play a constructive role in preventing such atrocious incidents.

Kazakhstan counts on the continuation of comprehensive, objective and transparent investigations and calls on the parties not act hastily without providing full and irrefutable evidence of the involvement of one side or the other.

Lastly, we think that the Council, as the main body for ensuring international peace and security, should remain consistent in acting on solid facts, based on evidence, in order to make objective and transparent decisions.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): We thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for its briefing and updates on the outcome of its investigation of the Salisbury incident. We also take note of the statement delivered by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to the Parliament, which was circulated among members of the Security Council yesterday. Furthermore, we have seen the summary of the report on activities carried out by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in support of a request for technical assistance by the United Kingdom, which was released two days ago.

Our position on the use of chemical weapons is well known, and we strongly condemn any use of chemical weapons by any State or non-State actor. It is unacceptable and constitutes a serious violation under international law. Nevertheless, we understand that a number of issues still require further clarification, and unfortunately we do not have all the necessary information before us.

One thing is very clear, however. Cooperation between the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation is absolutely vital in getting to the bottom of this issue. That should be done in good faith and a fair manner by undertaking the necessary consultation and exchange of information. That is what will help address the issue once and for all in a way that would allay the concerns of the United Kingdom and ultimately bring those responsible to justice.

Mrs. Cordova Soria (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We have taken note of the information provided today.

Bolivia reiterates its position of categorically rejecting the use of chemical compounds as weapons, since such use is an unjustifiable and criminal act and a serious crime under international law and undermines international peace and security. Their use by whomever and in whatever circumstances is heinous and constitutes a serious assault on human rights, the perpetrators of which must be identified and brought to justice.

This event sets a sensitive precedent, as it threatens the non-proliferation regime and therefore runs contrary to the provisions established by the Chemical Weapons Convention. We reiterate the need for an independent, transparent, objective, impartial and depoliticized investigation in accordance with the current norms of international law, mainly within the framework of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We reiterate the need for an independent investigation.

With regard to the March events, it is essential that the countries concerned turn to the corresponding diplomatic channels so as to comply with the principles

of mutual respect and bilateral cooperation, which will enable a solution to this issue to be reached. In that regard, making charges and accusations without engaging in the necessary dialogue and transparent exchange of information between the parties will not contribute to that goal. Lastly, we call for dialogue and respect to prevail as the situation develops.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): Equatorial Guinea has followed the developments in the events related to the use of a chemical agent in Salisbury on 4 March with concern. We are carefully following the current investigations aimed at full clarification of the incident. We expect them to be exhaustive, fair and independent, and in accordance with the relevant international norms.

Equatorial Guinea opposes the manufacture, storage and use of chemical weapons, which contravene the Chemical Weapons Convention and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and advocates for their complete prohibition and destruction. We hope that those responsible for their use, wherever that may occur, will be brought to international justice. We firmly condemn the attack on the lives of members of the Skripal family in Salisbury. We stand in solidarity with the British people, especially with the family of the victims who died as a result of this abominable crime.

Equatorial Guinea reiterates its hope that the parties concerned — the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation — will display moderation and find a way to manage the situation in an appropriate and reasonable manner while maintaining direct contact with one another.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea reaffirms its conviction that the complete and effective prohibition of chemical weapons and their destruction is a necessary step in realizing the purposes and principles of the Charter, especially the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We listened attentively to the statement by our British colleague, who had promised to provide new information on the investigation of the so-called Skripal affair. We have also carefully studied the statement by Britain's Prime Minister, Theresa May, to Parliament on the same topic. To be frank, we had very much hoped that today we would hear something convincing that could shed light on this mysterious incident. Unfortunately, our hopes were once again disappointed. In today's statement we heard the same litany of lies about so-called double agents being legitimate targets for murder by Russian special intelligence services; about the training of Russian special services in the handling of toxic chemicals; about Russia's development of military-grade chemical agents in Russia; about cyberattacks and attempts to engineer a coup d'état in Macedonia, and a whole lot more. I will not list this whole crazy cocktail of unfounded lies. Similar insinuations were heard from the British Prime Minister yesterday.

We learned only yesterday that the heroic British investigators released photographs of two individuals suspected of poisoning Sergei and Yulia Skripal. Today the British authorities are trying to proclaim it a sensation and a turning point in the investigation. Those individuals supposedly have Russian surnames and citizenship, and with that degree of certainty that is now so familiar to us, it is said to be "highly likely" that they are part of Russia's intelligence services. At the same time, it was immediately assumed that the names given were aliases. Furthermore, unlike in the situation with the previous unsubstantiated provocation of this type, the Litvinenko affair, the British have stated that they do not intend to request the suspects' extradition from Russia. Just as they have no intention of cooperating with the Russian authorities. Indeed, why bother with that? It does not suit London's game plan. In their statements today, many delegations urged Russia to cooperate with Great Britain. But in actuality the situation is precisely the opposite. It is we who are asking London to cooperate, not London asking us. And London is refusing that cooperation. London needs this affair for one reason and one reason only, which is to unleash hateful anti-Russian hysteria and drag other countries into it.

The number of inconsistencies and open questions in connection with Britain's new so-called evidence is off the charts. For example, the stamps on the photographs of the suspects supplied by London in which they are shown walking along an identical corridor, allegedly at Gatwick Airport, are timed to coincide to a fraction of a second. According to the data cited by Theresa May, the suspects appeared at the Skripals' house around noon on 4 March, although all the earlier police reports stated that the Skripals had left the house early that morning and did not return. So how did they come in contact with their house's allegedly poisoned doorknob? It is also hardly convincing that the suspects transported

the mythical Novichok in an ordinary perfume bottle. According to the published reports of experts from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) specifically with regard to the incident in Amesbury, the substance is so toxic and dangerous that special protective containers have to be used to transport it, or the person carrying it would inevitably be the first to fall victim to it.

There is a popular joke in Russia about a character named Uncatchable Joe. He is uncatchable not because no one can catch him but because nobody needs him or is even looking for him. I have a distinct feeling that we have been presented with two such uncatchable Joes, allegedly acting on orders from Moscow. Perhaps someone here finds this play convincing, but to me this new act seems just as cooked up and far-fetched as the previous acts, some of which unfolded in this Chamber.

Our British colleagues have taken a very convenient position. The verdict has been pronounced, the guilty party — Russia — has been declared, the suspects' real names are unknown, but it is alleged that they are employees of the Russian Military Intelligence Service. Although how that can be determined without their names is a big puzzle to us.

We have been called on to cooperate. As I said, it was we who asked London to cooperate, which was categorically refused from day one. Yesterday the British Ambassador was summoned to the Russian Foreign Ministry, where in answer to a request, he said that the British authorities would not hand over the information to the Russians that the suspects would have had to submit to the Embassy when applying for a visa. And yet that information even includes fingerprints, which would make identifying them much easier than from a picture on the Internet. Not that there is anything surprising about that. In the post-truth world created by our Western colleagues, a world of delirium and fakery, it is quite sufficient to pronounce sentence before bringing a verdict and even to begin punishment. London is not about to see this affair through to the end. It does not need to.

Since we have met here once again to listen to revelations from London, let us go over the broad outlines of what we have been presented with since the attempted murder in Salisbury on 4 March. We have two Russian citizens who have been exposed to a mysterious nerve agent, who are being held somewhere and to whom neither Russian consular employees nor close relatives are permitted access, in violation of all sorts of international legal and humanitarian norms. That is a fact. All we saw was Yulia Skripal's television appearance, which aroused a lot of questions and suspicions about the possibility that she was under serious moral and psychological pressure.

There is a letter in the form of an ultimatum to Russia demanding that it admit to the attempt on the Skripals' lives. There are also several letters from Russia to the British authorities proposing that it be included in the investigation and with an impressive list of specific questions that have gone unanswered. Lastly, there is the conclusion by the OPCW experts that a nerve agent, whose country of origin they were unable to establish, was used in Salisbury on 4 March. They were unable to establish it because it is impossible in principle.

And this is where the facts end. All the rest is mere speculation generated by the rich imagination and Russophobic fantasy of London officialdom. Our British colleagues simply pay no heed to the obvious contradictions in the investigation's conclusions, leaked out in calculated doses by the media, spinning new and ever more absurd versions. I will not list them, since I value my own time and that of Council members. I will only say that six months down the road, it is impossible to comprehend why Russia might want to poison the Skripals or why it should have done it in such a strange, recherché and illogical way. We were told that a gel was applied to the handle, but now Theresa May says that apparently the suspects brought it with them and used a perfume bottle. There are a ton of such inconsistencies.

The unfounded conclusions that it was Moscow that did all this were abundant, and were followed by concrete sanctions. It appears that in this continuing theatre of the absurd, the only winner is the Nina Ricci company, whose products are getting free advertising in their capacity as the container for the mythical Novichok. Anyone who has not yet lost hope of finding the perpetrators realized long ago that the British authorities still have no evidence of Russia's involvement in the Salisbury incident, or in fact any reasonable versions of what happened at all. To be honest, we have already lost hope. For us, therefore, the question is only what new ploys they will come up with in London in order to avoid a really serious investigation of the Skripal affair, rather than a politically motivated one. Unfortunately, the so-called sensation we were presented with today fits that simple

scheme perfectly. By the way, we have no problems with ordinary English citizens, for whom we have sympathy and respect, and who were able to see that during the World Cup in Russia. Our problem is only with the British Government, which is misleading not only the international community but its own citizens.

In conclusion, I would like to switch to more formal language and, in summary form, state the following. The Russian Federation firmly rejects all the groundless accusations of its involvement in the poisoning with toxic chemicals in the city of Salisbury in March 2018 of the Russian citizens Sergei and Yulia Skripal, as was again reiterated by Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May in a speech in Parliament on 5 September. We urge the British to show restraint. We affirm our willingness to hold consultations in accordance with the bilateral Consular Convention of 2 December 1965 and the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters of 20 April 1959. We demand consular access to Russian citizens who have been illegally detained by the British authorities.

We once again in full responsibility declare that the statements by the authorities in London, misleading the international community, to the effect that Russia alone could have possessed and now possesses the technical means, practical experience and motive for the commission of such acts using poisonous substances, are groundless. The Russian Federation has never developed, produced or stockpiled the toxic chemicals referred to in the West as Novichok. The very word "Novichok", as well as information about the structure and spectrum of this chemical compound, began to appear in foreign specialized scientific literature and applied databases based on information provided by Soviet defectors with only indirect connections to the former military chemical-weapon programme of the Soviet Union. Moreover, similar development was also being conducted in a number of other countries, including the United Kingdom, the United States and other Western States, and with the direct involvement of the Porton Down laboratory in the United Kingdom. There are volumes of specialized literature in the West about this research. The involvement of Porton Down is particularly important to an understanding of what happened in the Skripal case, as used by London against Russia and in the most recent incident, in Amesbury, in which the victims were British citizens. The Russian Federation appeals to all States to consider what has occurred with full responsibility and due understanding, and to support our call to the British Government to begin consultations with the Russian Federation in the context of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the other two aforementioned conventions.

In conclusion, what is clear from London's statement is that it already had all the information presented yesterday as long ago as May. If they had not determined the possible suspects and established the fact that they had been in Salisbury, there would have been no reason to search the hotel where they stayed. Clarly, if all the so-called evidence were as important as is claimed, it would have been published four months ago, before the tragic events in Amesbury. We can conclude only one thing from all of this, which is that Downing Street is governed not by the interests of seeing justice done but by other motives, which we have already mentioned.

The incident on 4 March became a useful pretext to whip up anti-Russian hysteria, and was used to undermine our authority as a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention on the eve of the staged use of chemical weapons in the Syrian city of Douma. We are seeing a similar picture today. The statement by Theresa May on 5 September took place on the eve of what we might call the new political season, and around the situation in Idlib, which is being actively discussed, and the chemical-weapon provocation that the militants, together with the White Helmets, have been preparing there, and which we have warned about more than once. We will circulate the relevant materials on the topic of today's meeting to the States Members of the United Nations.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United States.

This morning the Security Council is addressing the use of chemical weapons for the first of two times today. As we have done previously, the United States expresses its unequivocal condemnation of the use of chemical weapons, in Salisbury or anywhere else. We stand firm in defence of the international norm against the use of these horrific weapons, and we stand firm with the British people.

It is easy to express outrage, of course. We do it every day in this Chamber. What is difficult is finding solutions. Today our British friends and colleagues are providing us with a master class on how to stop the spread of chemical weapons. They are creating accountability for those who use chemical agents and

are providing vital support for the international norm against the use of these deadly, illegal weapons. The British Government is pursuing accountability for this attack in the only way accountability can truly be accomplished, that is, in accordance with the rule of law.

British investigators have conducted a full and fair investigation of what has been determined to be the attempted killings of Sergei and Yulia Skripal and Detective Nick Bailey. The investigators have linked those crimes with the chemical agent that poisoned Charlie Rowley and killed Dawn Sturgess. Prime Minister May went into great detail about each step of the investigation. Hundreds of detectives have analysed thousands of hours of closed circuit television (CCTV) footage and thousands of documents. Some things we knew already. British investigators had already concluded that Russia was responsible for the exposure of hundreds of people to a deadly agent on the streets of Salisbury. Now, thanks to the careful, methodical work of the British authorities, no one should have any doubts. It is actually amazing to see the clarity and undeniability of the results.

The British Government has identified two Russian nationals as responsible for the use of the Novichok nerve agent on British soil and the attempted murder of a British citizen and his daughter. Critically, the British have also concluded that the two men are officers of the Russian Military Intelligence Service. This was not, as Prime Minister May said, a rogue operation. It was a highly planned, purposely driven attack. The British have the suspects on CCTV from their arrival at Gatwick Airport, to their travel to the vicinity of the Skripals' house on the day of the attack, and finally their departure from Heathrow back to Moscow. Every one of us in the Chamber and listening around the world should be chilled to the bone by the findings of this investigation. As for the subsequent poisoning of Charlie Rowley and the death of Dawn Sturgess, Prime Minister May said it well:

> "Were these two suspects within our jurisdiction, there would be a clear basis in law for their arrest for murder."

That is how it is done. That is how individuals who commit murder and their heinous crimes are exposed. That is how nations that defy the international norms that keep us all safe are held to account. That is how the memories of those injured and killed, and the service of the first responders who cared for them, are honoured. It now falls to us to do our part.

Rather than accept responsibility for its actions, the Russian Government has offered only denials and counter-accusations, anything to deflect attention and distract from its guilt. The Russian denials have followed a familiar script. From Crimea to Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17 to Donbas to the killing of Litvinenko, the list goes on and on. And the song is always the same: Russia is somehow never behind these incidents. But no one is buying it. The most recent British action will ensure that Russia does not get away with this brazen attack. In direct response to Russia's use of chemical weapons in the Salisbury incident, the United States has announced additional sanctions against Russia. As we acted together with our NATO allies and other partners, 153 Russian officials were expelled around the world in response to the attack on the Skripals on British soil.

While this incident was in Salisbury, who is to say it could not have happened in Paris, Amsterdam or Addis Ababa? We must now help our British friends find the two Russian suspects they have identified and bring them to face justice in the United Kingdom. Better yet, why can the Russian Government not turn those two murderers over to British authorities? We must fight and win the broader battle against impunity for the use of chemical weapons. This is a day for explanations from Russia, and solidarity with our colleagues in the United Kingdom.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of the United Kingdom has asked to make a further statement.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I thank colleagues for the views and expressions of solidarity and support. I also thank those colleagues who repeated their revulsion at the use of chemical weapons wherever and whenever it occurs. I just want to make it very clear that the United Kingdom shares that position about bolstering the international prohibition on the use of chemical weapons.

I was asked a number of questions, Madam President, so with your permission I will respond briefly.

I was asked about the investigation. I would just like to recall for my colleagues that in the United Kingdom, the police are independent of Government.

The investigation has been independent. The one into the murder of Dawn Sturgess, which is ongoing, is also independent. We believe that it is methodical and comprehensive.

I was asked about inconsistencies in the evidence identifying the two Russian individuals as Russian Military Intelligence Service (GRU) operatives. We have closed-circuit television footage. We are happy to share those images with colleagues. To take one instance, the Russian Ambassador mentioned that there was a time stamp in the same corridor for both individuals. I do not know if the Ambassador has been to Gatwick Airport. We have been to Gatwick Airport. There are multiple identical corridors through which people can go. That is what happened to the two Russians. We are confident in our evidence, and I am very happy to talk to any colleague. Indeed, any member of the General Assembly who has doubts about the evidence is very welcome to come and have a briefing at the British Mission.

I was also asked about cooperation with the Russian authorities. I would like to recall for Council colleagues that when this episode first happened in March, my Government went to the Russian authorities and asked for their cooperation. We were given a reply that the request for cooperation was null and void. We would have been happy to collaborate with the Russian authorities at the time. We have indicated our willingness to do so since that point, but in fact what we have seen is a diversion into avenues that are not relevant to this particular case. I think that is a great pity. The Russians also asked us if they could join the investigation once it was under way. I have said before in this Chamber, and I repeat it, that you do not recruit an arsonist to put out a fire. You especially do not do that when the fire is one that the arsonist caused.

I was asked about GRU operatives using fake names. The names may be fake but the crimes are real. The time for lies and discrimination has passed, and it is now time for truth and accountability. We have not assumed that the Russians are guilty. We have done an investigation. The assumption of guilt over innocence may happen in the Russian judicial system. It does not happen in the United Kingdom's, but I do think there is an interesting question for the Russian authorities as to whether the GRU operatives were incompetent in what they did to leave traces or whether they were rogue. I think that is an important angle to think about.

We were accused of not granting consular access to the Skripals. In fact, as I have told the Council, we did pass on the details from the Russian Consulate in London to Yulia Skripal, and it was her wishes that we followed in all subsequent contact. I am glad to say that Yulia is making a good recovery. We have had no other thought in our dealings with her than her welfare and her wishes.

We are now up to some 37 accounts from Russia as to why and how Salisbury took place. I think that none of them hold water. We believe that the evidence we have presented speaks for itself, but I repeat that I am very happy to give any Member of the United Nations that would so wish a briefing on that. We should recall that a woman has died, two people have narrowly escaped death, a whole city was placed at risk, and the global chemical-weapon non-proliferation regime has also been placed at risk. I would hope that the Russians would respect the Council, engage on the facts and accept the compelling evidence of Russian complicity in this crime.

As regards the British allegations against Russia about Douma, I think again that this shows that many Russian authorities work in a parallel universe where facts and international norms are inverted. We abhor the use of chemical weapons. We take our responsibilities under the Chemical Weapons Convention extremely seriously. We call on the Syrian authorities and the Russian authorities who work with them not to use chemical weapons against their own people and not to repeat the experience of eastern Ghouta and Douma. But as you, Madam, our French colleagues and the United Kingdom have made clear, we will uphold our international responsibilities and we will uphold the international commitments and obligations that the international community has laid down.

In conclusion, the world is poorer owing to the fact that Russia, a permanent member of the Security Council, will not join us in doing precisely that to uphold the international order.

The President: The representative of the Russian Federation has asked to make a further statement.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Unfortunately, I have not learned anything new from my British colleague's further statement. We heard the same set of unsubstantiated accusations that we have heard in previous meetings. I would like to mention a couple of factual things. As I said about

consular access to Yulia and Sergei Skripal, we do not have that access. Another significant fact is that Yulia Skripal's own sister, who lives in Russia and who wanted to visit her — and Yulia had given her consent to that — has twice been refused a visa for the United Kingdom by the British Embassy. Does that not tell us something?

With regard to the request that the British allegedly made to Russia immediately after the incident, we have already had the pleasure of commenting more than once on the nature of that request, which was no request at all. It was the then British Foreign Minister Boris Johnson's demand of the Russian Ambassador in London that Russia admit to the crime and say how it was committed, whether with the knowledge of the Russian authorities or by misunderstanding or lack of oversight. That was in fact the entire so-called request for cooperation with Russia. There should be no misleading of the international community here. There was no request from the British for Russia's cooperation in investigating this case. On the contrary, Russia's repeated requests, both within the framework of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and in other ways, for conducting a joint investigation with the British confirmed our readiness to engage fully in this.

Of course, I understand that our British colleague said that we live in parallel universes — and perhaps some people would like us to live on another planet — but there are no colonized planets yet, so we must live on the one we have. And on this planet we will have to cooperate, whether others like it or not. And to most of the questions we have laid out — and there are more than 40 of them — there are still no answers. Just as there are no multiple Russian versions of what happened, something that the British representative tried to say today, suggesting that journalistic versions represent the position of the Russian authorities. We too will be happy to give a briefing to interested delegations on how we see the situation, on what has happened and what is now happening with Britain's so-called investigation.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.